

EDUCATION

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

Q: When will Hawaii public schools reopen?

A: Hawaii public schools opened on August 17, 2020, with instruction provided through in-person/blended and learning from home models. School year 2020-21 will follow HIDOE *Return to Learn: School Reopening Plan*. Most public and charter schools will continue distance learning through the second quarter, which ends on December 18. The *Return to Learn: School Reopening Plan* is the Department's specific response to the impact of the COVID-19 health pandemic and will evolve as new guidance becomes available, more information on the plan and the guidelines used by HIDOE can be found [here](#). The current reopening guidelines and steps schools can take to reduce risks of COVID-19 for students and staff can be found [here](#).

Q: What kind of resources are available to support distance learning?

A: The HIDOE is developing a process to loan devices to students with limited or no device or internet access at home. Parents in need of support should connect with their school to make this request. In addition to providing services for access to computers and internet hotspots, HIDOE has launched a statewide help desk to provide technology support to students and their parents. The '[Ohana Help Desk](#)', provides phone support in multiple languages, chat support and an online portal to assist with students and parents on connectivity-related issues (e.g. network and wifi connectivity), access and security issues, device support (e.g. devices, applications, software updates) and general IT support.

Q: What funding is available to increase connectivity for online schooling?

A: As we enter into an unprecedented time of distance learning, we must ensure all students have access to their online lessons. The *Coronavirus, Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act* (P.L. 116-136) provides \$30.7 billion for an Education Stabilization Fund for states, school districts, and institutions of higher education to assist with costs related to coronavirus. These funds will support schools as they develop plans for online learning for students, allowing schools to purchase education technology, including hardware, software, and connectivity.

Q: Will the U.S. Department of Education grant waivers for special evaluation timelines under the IDEA Act?

A: The *CARES Act* (P.L.116-136) provides authority to the U.S. Department of Education to grant waivers for certain accountability and reporting requirements. This provision is intended to give schools the maximum possible flexibility as they continue to serve their students during this public health crisis. The U.S. Department of Education has recommended that Congress enact a waiver that would extend the evaluation timeline for children making the transition from federal special education service for infants and toddlers (under Part C of the IDEA Act) to those for school-age children (Part B). But, it will take an act of the U.S. Congress to implement any additional waivers under the IDEA Act.